

# HUMANISTIC VALUES of the ICARIAN MOVEMENT



LES COLONIES ICARIANNES AUX ETATS-UNIS



Lillian M. Snyder

Editor



# HUMANISTIC VALUES OF THE ICARIAN MOVEMENT

Proceedings  
of the  
Symposium on the "Revelance of the Icarian  
Movement to Today's World"

Lillian M. Snyder  
Editor

Nauvoo, Illinois  
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Etienne Cabet

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
Lillian M. Snyder	
ETIENNE CABET AND HIS WORLD .....	7
Jacques C. Chicoineau	
VOYAGE TO ICARIA: A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD .....	14
Robert P. Sutton	
HUMANISTIC VALUES OF THE ICARIAN COMMUNITY TO SUSTAIN LIFE .....	26
Del Stites	
ICARIANISM AND ICARIA: FROM MOVEMENT TO SOCIAL ORGANIZATION .....	33
Wayne Wheeler	
ABOUT THE AUTHORS .....	39
Lillian Snyder .....	40
Jacques Chicoineau .....	42
Robert Sutton .....	44
Del Sites .....	46
Wayne Wheeler .....	47



# INTRODUCTION

Lillian M. Snyder

Commemorating the 130th anniversary of the landing of the Icarians in Nauvoo on March 15, 1849, the Descendants of Icarians organized the "Icarian Weekend in Nauvoo" for July 21, and 22, 1979. Approximately 300 persons attended one or more of the program events. These included a walking tour of Icarian sites, a symposium on "The Relevance of the Icarian Movement to Today's World," a multi-media presentation "Seven American Icarias" on Saturday evening, and a picnic in the Nauvoo State Park on Sunday.

"Humanistic Values of the Icarian Movement for Today's World" was the theme of the Weekend events, which were sponsored by the Center for Icarian Studies at Western Illinois University, the Institute for Icarian Investigations at University of Nebraska at Omaha, and the Descendants of Icarians.

The Icarian movement had its origin in France in 1840 with the publication of a novel, *Voyage en Icarie*<sup>1</sup>, by Etienne Cabet. Cabet, a lawyer and political journalist, was the spokesman for these citizens of France and neighboring countries who were discouraged by the sudden increase in taxes, inflation, rates of crime, and rioting in the streets. Followers of Cabet called themselves Icarians and brought pressure on author Cabet to establish a social organization which might be able to demonstrate to others how to cope with these problems. The Icarians practiced their style of social organization in seven different locations in the United States during a fifty-year span--the longest continuance of any of the 450 utopian societies which emigrated from the Old World during the 18th and 19th centuries, with the exception of those having a strictly religious base.

Stimulated by their interest in genealogy, the descendants of the Icarians have returned to Nauvoo annually during the third weekend in July for the past eleven years. Each year they have presented papers on various aspects of the history of the Icarian movement as well as family anecdotes which have been handed down by word of mouth. These talks have been tape recorded.



This symposium was the first formal effort to invite scholars from humanistic fields to present their views on the "Relevance of the Icarian Movement to Today's World." In introducing the symposium, I commented on the following questions: Why are we here today? Why do we have an interest and curiosity in the Icarian movement? What do we expect to accomplish?

Why are we here today?

Exactly 130 years ago 260 individuals chose Nauvoo to establish an experiment in social organization in order to further the ideals of a "true" democracy and the goals of Christian brotherhood. It was not easy for these idealists to leave their homes in Europe and to sever ties with family and friends. Knowing that the Icarians were ill-prepared for what was to come, Cabet had admonished his followers to take at least two years to ready themselves for their new venture abroad. But at the end of almost a nine-year period following the publication *Voyage en Icarie*, the ground-swell for pushing ahead could not be held back. A compromise was reached by sending an advance party of forty-nine volunteers to America. These men left LeHavre at dawn on February 3, 1848, and arrived in New Orleans on March 27, 1848, prepared equally for success or failure in their experiment. The determined pioneers believed that posterity could profit from their experience.<sup>2</sup>

I explained that the symposium presented an opportunity to examine the meaning of their experiment. The Icarian Movement was an outgrowth of the ideas and values of its leader, Etienne Cabet. Pushed by the economic stress and moral decay of Western Europe in the early Nineteenth Century and pulled by a zest to demonstrate a new approach to solving the world's problems a small band of Cabet's followers risked their safety, well-being, and even their lives in a demonstration of shared living which they believed would be an example to others for coping with the problems of existence.

Although many of the Icarians were driven out of their European existence by despair and urge for survival, they also felt a larger mission to publicize their experiment so that others could profit by their success as well as their failure.

Why do we have an interest and curiosity in the Icarian Movement?

Accepting the challenge of the Icarians for posterity to examine the success as well as the failure of their social organization, the descendants are interested in exploring how their own current philosophies and goals in today's world have been shaped by the heritage of this experiment, based on equality, solidarity, fraternity, and liberty. They have adopted a Constitution with the following objectives: 1) To perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men, women, and children who established the society of Icaria, 2) to familiarize the descendants of Icarians, their spouses, associate members, friends, and all interested persons with the history of the Society of Icaria and the principles and precepts upon which the society was founded, as well as the factors which caused the eventual demise of the society, 3) to establish an annual meeting place for those interested in the study of Icarian society's endeavors, and how the Icarian Movement contributed to the history of America.

The Center for Icarian Studies at Western Illinois University was established in April, 1977, to provide a center for scholars to pursue their studies of the early history of the area and to provide a repository for manuscripts, publications, and documents. The Institute for Icarian Investigations at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, was incorporated in December, 1976, as an educational and scientific organization to foster an interest in the study of the Icarian Movement and communities in Europe and America.

The combined efforts of these three groups attracted the support of the Illinois Humanities Council in bringing this unique chapter of communal history to the attention of the public. Now in its fourth year, the Council supplies funds to non-profit groups for the support of public humanities programs. The concern for what it means to be human--the questions of value, the conceptions and judgments of the past that provide meaning and context for everything we do and experience--are bound together and preserved by the disciplines called "the humanities." The Council provided an opportunity for participants in the Icarian Weekend to examine the Icarian experience with professionals from the humanities community.

Moreover, there is a national interest in studying the communal experiences of our country. The organization, Descendants of Icarians, is a charter member of the National Historic Communal Societies' Association. This association, with similar groups, provides the opportunity for Icarian

descendants and scholars to make comparisons between the philosophy and objectives of Icaria and those of other utopian societies.

The objective of the Icarian Weekend, therefore, was to increase general knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the Icarian Movement in the United States and to deepen our self-knowledge and awareness of those cultural attitudes that influence our decision making in coping with our current existence.

What do we expect to accomplish?

The Icarian Weekend offered an opportunity for the sponsoring organizations to help fulfill their common goal to study the past. Through mutual support we mean to further the unique goals of each and do this by learning even more of the Icarian experience. The descendants are interested in ascertaining their ancestors' attitudes toward life, their family practices, their vocational pursuits, and the assimilation process in American life. The Center for Icarian Studies is working to encourage scholars to appreciate and to expand knowledge of Icarian culture. Furthermore, the Institute for Icarian Investigations seeks to foster study in the communitarian aspect of the Icarian movement in relation to the beginnings of the movement in Europe and to its demonstration in Corning, Iowa. By encouraging broad citizen participation, the Illinois Humanities Council emphasizes the need for clarification of values and issues through the humanities.

### Organization of Papers

Under the theme of "Humanistic Values of the Icarian Movement" the symposium was organized to present papers which began with the inception of the ideals of Icarianism, how they evolved, and these ideals might be applied to today's world.

Beginning with the leader of the movement, Etienne Cabet, the question immediately arises: Into what kind of political climate and spiritual world was he born? Some readers may surmise that he was a product of his times. Many intervening forces of change were at play. What personal values and characteristics attracted people to Cabet's views? Professor Chicoineau has eloquently dealt with these questions in his opening chapter on "Etienne Cabet and His World."

Some historians might say that Cabet's writings outdistanced his personal qualities in their influence on political life in France. Professor Sutton, an historian, gave an overview of Cabet's novel *Voyage to Icaria*. Professor Sutton has presented the events leading to the publication of the novel, how it was received, and its effect on the reader. It became a "best seller." The book was patterned after Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. It is not a prescription to be followed in organizing a community. The ideas are presented on a level of abstraction which attracted thousands of adherents. Professor Sutton described the message Cabet conveys to the reader.

In a natural sequence Professor Stites, a philosopher, spells out the "Humanistic Values of the Icarian Community to Sustain Life." Life is sustained not only in the production of bread, but in the realization of spiritual values. Cabet led the weekly discussions on the application of the spiritual values taken from his book *True Christianity According to Jesus Christ*. The main thrust of the moral values was the daily demonstration of sharing the work and the results of labors and communal living.

Professor Wheeler, a specialist in the study of community, in the final chapter, "Icarianism and Icaria: From Social Movement to Social Organization," described the sequence of events in which an utopian ideal of brotherhood is operationalized into a community organization which functioned under varying degrees of success.

The Icarian Weekend would have been impossible without the combined support of these sponsoring organizations. The Nauvoo Order of Benedictine Sisters also gave its generous support, the Nauvoo Senior Citizen's Club donated secretarial services, and historical societies in the area assisted with promotion and publicity. Finally, the Icarian Weekend might not have occurred without the sustained interest and support of Florence Baxter Snyder, granddaughter of Emile Baxter, a former secretary of the Colony, to whom many descendants returning to Nauvoo during the past three decades have been directed for information about their ancestors.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Cabet, Etienne, *Voyage en Icarie*, (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1972)
2. Shaw, Albert, *Icaria A Chapter in the History of Communism* (New York: Putnam's, 1884)  
  
*See also Prudhommeaux, Jules Jean, Icarie et Son Fondateur, Etienne Cabet* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1972)
3. Cabet, Etienne, *Le Vrai Christianisme Suivant Jésus-Christ* (Paris: Au Bureau du Populaire, 1846)

## ETIENNE CABET AND HIS WORLD

Jacques C. Chicoineau

Etienne Cabet and his world, or Etienne Cabet and his worlds? This delicate distinction, singular or plural, noticeable only on account of the letter "s," which we, French people, are very careful not to pronounce, was the first problem I encountered when I started to put my thoughts together in order to prepare this paper.

Etienne Cabet, indeed, was born at a very significant time of history, at the hinge of two worlds.

When he first saw the light in Dijon, France, on January 1, 1788, his country was ruled by an absolute monarch of divine right. Barely had he reached the age of five when this monarch was beheaded by the machine of Dr. Guillotin. France had become a Republic and was shaken by the waves of the Great Revolution, which was to play the main role in the intellectual and political formation of our utopist.

The crumbling of an order almost ten centuries old, the emergence of a new world, painfully begotten, did not escape the attention of the foreign observers. Goethe, who had witnessed the battle of Valmy, on September 22, 1792, wrote: "Here and today starts a new era of the History of the World, and you would be able to say that you were there."<sup>1</sup>

This new era was the epoch during which Etienne Cabet studied, became a man, a political thinker, the dreamer of a utopia, one of the artisans of two revolutions, the President of Icaria, a fallen leader, and the agonizing man who passed away in St. Louis on November 8, 1856.

The goal of this presentation is to study the worlds of Etienne Cabet and some of the events and people who influenced the life of the man now resting for eternity in the New St. Marcus Cemetery in St. Louis.

In the preface of his novel *Thérèse Raquin*, Emile Zola wrote: "In order to place the man in his moral category, as one places a substance in its



chemical category, it will be sufficient to rigorously know the conditions of the experimentation of which each one is the "subject": race, environment, moment, and -- variable factor -- the prevailing quality, the principal faculty, consequence of the physiology of the individual."<sup>2</sup> The method advocated by Emile Zola can help us to place Cabet, not only in his "moral category," but also in his own world or worlds.

Let's consider first his "race," placing this word between quotations, for it is obvious that for us the word "race" has a special and very limited meaning. Maybe the word "stock" would be more appropriate.

Etienne Cabet was born in Dijon, in the heart of Burgundy. His ancestors on both sides were all working men: peasants, vine-growers, petty craftsmen, hundreds and hundreds of obscure men and women who struggled for centuries for their daily bread. Though their names will never appear in history books, it was theirs who made France. The Burgundians were gentle and peace-loving people of Germanic Extraction, who took refuge in the southeastern part of Gaul during the fifth century, established first a kingdom which became later the Duchy of Burgundy. Burgundy knew its most famous and glorious time during the second part of the fifteenth century, under Charles the Bold.

The people of Burgundy are past masters in the art of wine-making. (We will see that Cabet's father was a cooper.) Full of joy of life, liking good wines and good food, the Burgundians have a song which summarizes in a nutshell their philosophy of life:

"Merry child of Burgundy,  
I never had bad luck,  
When I see my bloated face reddening,  
I am proud to be a Burgundian . . . "

This picture of a man with a reddened face is not exactly the one we are imagining when we see Cabet's portrait, but we should remember that it was under Cabet's direction that the Icarians started to grow vine and to make in Nauvoo a wine which is still one of the specialties of this town.

Etienne Cabet was the fourth and last son of Claude Cabet, who was a cooper, "a patriot working man" as it was said during the Revolution, and



of Françoise Berthier, his wife. According to French philologist Albert Dauzat, the name Cabet is a diminutive of cap, which means head. The first Cabet was supposed to be "a person with a small head" . . . while Berthier is an ancient baptismal name, coming from the German words berth, brilliant, and hari, army.<sup>3</sup>

Now that we have established of what stock Etienne Cabet was born, we will see what his environment was at different epochs of his life.

His father was a follower of Robespierre and the party known as "la Montagne," the extremists of the Convention. Jules Prudhommeaux tells us: "Time was rough (during Cabet's infancy), and people were working hard around little Etienne, the noise of the hammer knocking the staves didn't prevent the sound of the echoes of the great revolutionary days to enter the humble workshop in Dijon, which was then filled with hurrahs and songs. August 10th and the 9th of Thermidor, Valmy and Jemmapes, Saint-Just and Robespierre, these resounding dates, these famous names, mumbled by the babe on coming out of the crib, woke up his imagination and were for him the first revelations of glory."<sup>4</sup>

Being near-sighted, Etienne was unable to learn the trade of his father, who was clever enough to decide that his younger son would be a learned man. In spite of Claude Cabet's political orientation, the son was raised in the Catholic faith and studied the teaching of "citizen Jesus Christ." As all adolescents, he passed through a crisis of mysticism, described in his *Voyage en Icarie*: ". . . I had the feeling that I was seeing everywhere the eye of God, a huge eye, open and looking at me . . ." but after having begged God to manifest Himself by a sign, and not receiving any answer he "was cured from (his) madness" and stopped to believe "without feeling any uneasiness of conscience."<sup>5</sup> This episode of his life is important for us who are studying his philosophy. We should understand that Cabet, like Diderot and many other eighteenth century thinkers was at best a "deist," not to say an "atheist," and that he rejected the teachings of the Christian religion. We should not be fooled by his use of religious vocabulary. For him Jesus Christ was a philosopher, the first man who preached the Community of goods to his followers, but He was not the Son of God, the Incarnation of a supreme being. We know that early in his life Cabet joined the French Freemasonry, which has a solid anti-christian tradition.

In 1803, at the age of 15, he became a teacher at the "lycée" of Dijon, thanks to the old Director of that establishment, Monsieur Jacotot. His master had a great influence on him during his formative years. For example, it was because of Jacotot's Bonapartism that Cabet was not strongly opposed to the man of Brumaire Eighteenth. "For example it was because of Jacotot's Bonapartism that Cabet was not too much opposed to Napoléon Bonaparte in spite of the fact that the Corsican had strangled the French Revolution by his coup d'état of Brumaire 18th, 1799." He accepted the First Empire, and in 1814 he strongly rejected the Restoration of the Bourbons. In 1815 he rejoiced in the return of Napoléon from the island of Elba, but refused a post of District Attorney. Nevertheless, after the defeat of Napoléon at Waterloo, he was suspended for three months by the government of the second Restoration.

Cabet had studied law. In 1810, at the age of 22, he was licensed to practice law, and in 1812, he received his Doctor's Degree in jurisprudence. In 1816 he became famous among the liberals in defending General Vaux, who was acquitted in Dijon, while many other generals faithful to their Emperor were facing the firing squad.

During the reign of Joachim Murat in the kingdom of Naples (1808-1815), a secret organization was formed aiming at freeing Italy from foreign rule and obtaining constitutional liberties. The members of this society called themselves "Carbonari," an Italian word meaning "charcoal burners," for they were meeting very often in the deepest part of forests. The spirit of freedom which animated the Italian members of these lodges was an example and an emulation for the French. It is not surprising that, at the time of the Restoration (as early as 1820), a French branch of the "Carbonari" was founded. The organization was divided into branches called "ventes" (sales unit) and headed by a "grande vente" (supreme sale unit). At that time, Etienne Cabet became a "Carbonaro". In 1822 he was elected member of "La Grande Vente" and worked directly under General La Fayette, supreme master of the French Carbonari. He traveled intensively, preparing the uprising which occurred on July 27, 28, and 29, 1830, bringing the fall of Charles X, the last Bourbon king.

At that time, his eyes gave him so much trouble that he became almost blind. He was therefore unable to plead in courts. He left Dijon for Paris, and became the secretary of Monsieur Nicod, a famous lawyer at the "Cour

de Cassation" (highest court of appeal). In 1828, he was Director of the *Recueil de jurisprudence générale* published by Désiré Dalloz.

On the eve of the Revolution of 1830, Cabet was a very good lawyer, having strong ties with all the leaders of the Liberal Party. During the "Three Glorious Days," he took part in the short-lived revolt on the side of La Fayette, a revolt which brought the abdication of Charles X, and following the line of conduct of his boss, he accepted the so-called "Republican Monarchy" of Louis-Philippe. His honeymoon with the former Duke of Orléans was not to last long! As a reward he was made Attorney General of Corsica, a reward which looks like an exile. Because of his inability to restrain criticisms of the new government and his proclaimed attachment to a Republican regime, he was soon dismissed. He decided to become more militant in politics. On July 6, 1831, he was elected Deputy of his Department of Côte d'Or. In 1833, seeking an outlet for his opinions, he abandoned the law practice to establish a newspaper of opposition, *Le Populaire*.

In 1834, two inflammatory articles aroused the wrath of King Louis-Phillippe and his government and led to a charge of treason. Faced with two years of prison, Cabet preferred an exile of five years. He went first to Belgium, where he was declared "persona non grata," then to England, where he was rejoined by Delphine Lesage and the daughter she had borne him. They were married in London. Cabet wrote his huge *Histoire Populaire de la Révolution française de 1789 à 1830*, read a lot, and met with the Frenchmen in exile. He wrote also a book which was to be a tremendous success. After its publication in France in 1840, it created an incredible movement of enthusiasm among the French working class. This was his *Voyage en Icarie*. In February 1848, another Revolution broke out in France. Louis-Philippe, the "Citizen King," fled to England, and the Second Republic was proclaimed. Cabet played an eminent part in these events. Meanwhile, the provisional government being weak and entirely in the hands of bourgeoisie, the working class became first disappointed, then frankly hostile. Only Cabet's intervention saved the life of the members of that government on March 17, 1848, when 200,000 men marched toward the City Hall of Paris. The climax of the crisis occurred during the period between June 23 and 27, when the French army under Cavaignac brutally crushed an uprising of the masses. Cabet was then forced to hide for a few weeks.

On December 13, 1848, at the age of sixty, Cabet sailed to America on board the ship *Rome* to join the first wave of his followers, the Icarians, at that time facing terrible difficulties in the United States.

Such was the environment in which Etienne Cabet was born, grew, learned, and developed his political and philosophical thoughts. Such was the world of Etienne Cabet while he was still in Europe.

In America the environment in which Etienne Cabet lived was a lot more simple, a lot less sophisticated. He joined his followers in New Orleans, took them to the former Mormon City of Nauvoo and tried to develop "in vivo" the Community he had dreamed of when writing his *Voyage en Icarie*. To relate all the petty events of Icaria Nauvoo and to describe the life of Cabet in St. Louis during the two days between his arrival and his death is not my intention today. The world of Cabet was then a closed one, with a minimum of contacts with the outside world, but did include the Paris office of the Icarians. In 1854 Etienne Cabet and many of his followers became U.S. citizens. Meanwhile, Jules Prudhommeaux summarizes the relationship between the young American Republic and the Icarians -- "Freedom and Indifference."

\* \* \*

At the beinning of this presentation, I quoted Emile Zola, who told us that in order to place a man in his category one should study his race, his environment, the moment and his prevailing quality. The prevailing quality is irrelevant for our purpose today.

We now know what were the origins of Etienne Cabet; we saw in what environment he lived in France as well as in America. The third constant --the moment, or rather, the moments -- will be our conclusion.

Born under Louis XVI, absolute king, at the time of the discussion of the Constitution of the United States of America, he was an infant during the French Revolution and the terms in office of George Washington; a student and a young lawyer at the time of Napoléon I and Thomas Jefferson; a rebel during the Restoration of the Bourbons; an artisan, then an opponent of the July Monarchy; a successful political leader at the birth of the Second Republic; a proscript after June 1848; an emigrant in the United States dur-

ing the term in office of James Knox Polk; and when Cabet died, Franklin Pierce was at the White House and Napoléon III at the Tuileries Palace.

I would like to have time to develop another fold of the topic, the intellectual world of Etienne Cabet, but it will carry us too far away, and maybe -- who knows? -- it can be the subject of another presentation.

#### FOOTNOTES

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2. Zola, Emile *Therese Raquin* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1966), Preface to the First Edition.
3. Dauzat, Albert *Dictionnaire des Noms de Famille et Prenoms de France* (Paris: Larousse, 1951), pp. 40, 76.
4. Prudhommeaux, Jules *Icarie et son Fondateur Etienne Cabet* (Philidelphia: Porcupine Press, Inc., 1972), p. 1.
5. Cabet, Etienne *Voyage en Icarie* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1970), Chapter XXXVIII, p. 281.



## VOYAGE TO ICARIA: A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

Robert P. Sutton

During the 1960's and early 1970's, with the rapid appearance of hippie communal experiments in the United States, the public became sensitive to what appeared as unprecedented protests against many of the values of middle-class American society. To most historians, however, it was apparent that we were really seeing old wine in new bottles, in the sense that, from the days of John Winthrop and the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay, America has been viewed from time to time as a potential "Beacon Light" to the world. In perspective, then, the most recent effort to re-make our nation's values was in a direct-line heritage with its seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century predecessors.

American utopian experiments have generally been divided into two styles, religious and secular, with the former usually outlasting the latter. In Illinois there were examples of these two styles existing almost at the same time -- the 1840's and 1850's -- and, at the same place: the Mormons and the Icarians at the town of Nauvoo. Today I want to examine the ideas which inspired the largely French immigrants who tried to build their new and perfect society, Icaria, on the banks of the Mississippi beginning three years after the Latter Day Saints moved on to create their Zion in the West.

The founder of the Icarians, Etienne Cabet, as has been shown in the first paper, had been tried and condemned as a traitor by the French courts, and in 1834 was given the alternative between prison or exile. Cabet chose the latter, and, in the fall of that year, crossed the English Channel for an enforced five-year stay in London. It was there that the story of Icaria at Nauvoo began.<sup>1</sup>

He arrived in London on May 1, 1834, then having reached the age of forty-six. Safely domiciled, he sequestered himself in the British Museum and other city libraries to begin a concentrated study of history and philosophy. The first product of this somewhat late-blooming scholarship was the publication of a historical indictment of the nineteenth-century European industrial society. In the introduction to this work, entitled

*Popular History of the French Revolution from 1789 to 1830*, he set forth the ideas which were to be fully developed later in his most important literary effort, *Voyage to Icaria*. In the *History* Cabet wrote:

By Democracy . . . I mean the principle of brotherhood and of equality, without exclusion or oppression of anyone; I mean the material, intellectual and moral improvement of the less happy classes; I mean their progressive, continual, ceaseless betterment without other limit than the possible, raising the one rather than leveling the other, giving a competency to the poor without making the rich poor. In a word, I mean the social and political machine most favorable to the dignity and perfection of man, to public order, to respect for laws, to the happiness of all citizens, giving as its basis education and work.<sup>2</sup>

As Dr. Sylvester A. Piotrowski commented in his 1935 doctoral dissertation, "Cabet intended his *Histoire de la Revolution* to breathe a sort of philosophy of history -- an interpretation which would enable his readers to note the mistakes of past generations and, presumably, profit by new and specific social dispensation."<sup>3</sup> The fully developed body of his philosophy never appeared in the *History*, however, since even sympathetic readers saw it as an "impartial historical work" which "would not permit him to follow through with his own social thought to a satisfactory conclusion, much less supply a foundation."<sup>4</sup>

Of all the subjects Cabet perused in books during his research in London, four seemed to dominate the development of his social thought: Christian morality, the utopianism of Sir Thomas More, the ideology of the French Revolution, and the doctrines of nineteenth-century French sociologists.

From the New Testament Cabet adopted as the cornerstone of his new social structure, the Christian "Golden Rule," more precisely, the doctrine of the universal brotherhood of all mankind. As he wrote on the subject on page 276 of the *Voyage*, his system had



. . .no other objective than to lead men to love each other like brothers by giving them as a rule of conduct these three principles which summarize all; 'Love your neighbor as yourself. Do not unto others the harm that you would not have others do to you. Do to others the good that you wish for yourself.'<sup>5</sup>'

And, as Cabet more fully organized his ideas later in the book *The True Christianity According to Jesus Christ* (1846), the ideal of society is a community operating as a form of religion. "Jesus Christ came to bring a new law," he observed, "a new social principle, a new system of organization for society . . . .His great social principle then was the Brotherhood of men and of nations . . . . Therefore, our Icarian communism is true Christianity, we are true Christians, disciples of Jesus Christ; his gospel is our Code, and it is his doctrine which is our guide."<sup>6</sup>

Cabet was equally explicit about his debt to Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. As quoted by Piotrowski, Cabet wrote:

It was the *Utopia* of Thomas More which I wished to read in English, which decided me to study the communistic system. From its first lines this system impressed me so that I closed the book to collect my own thoughts in meditations that led me to the most complete conviction. I adopted my plan and began to draw it up. It was only then that I read all the works, going back to the original and following the order of time.<sup>7</sup>

The format of the *Voyage* is almost a direct imitation of *Utopia*. There is the same imaginary, mysterious island found at the far reaches of the earth (no-place, to cite a literal translation of the Greek word *utopia*, i.e., *ou* = not, *topos* = a place). Both books portray a land of political and social perfection. The twentieth-century writer Charles Gide has observed: "In the year 1838 he [Cabet] had written a romance after the manner of More's *Utopia* and had given it the title of *Voyage en Icarie* . . ."<sup>8</sup> Three centuries separated the two men, but despite similarities, Cabet was a product of his age, that is, of the ideology of the French Revolution.

Taking a clue from Rousseau, Cabet described at length his formula for the creation of an "Empire of Reason," starting from a State of Nature in which private property, that deplorable creation of our fancy and a fiction of law, to use Cabet's words, is non-existent.<sup>9</sup> In Cabet's system, without the temptations contributing to individual selfishness inherent in the ownership of property, there is no conflict between individualism and the interests of the community. Absolute equality reigned in Icaria as expressed in a representative government called the Council. To quote from the *Voyage*:

In the Community, it is the whole of Society, it is the whole People who make the laws, . . . and it always acts according to Nature and Reason, always in general agreement, . . . and these laws, always agreed upon and desired, are always obeyed with pleasure and at the same time with a sentiment of fealty.<sup>10</sup>

The fourth major influence upon Cabet was the thinking of contemporary French sociologists, particularly Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier. One authority has commented on this connection by observing that "as his social planning is contemplated chronologically there is evident in the bewildering detail of . . . *Voyage en Icarie*, and other writings, the same profound influence in fundamentals mirrored in the other Utopian Socialists." "Only in method, atmosphere, and application," he concluded, "did they differ."<sup>11</sup>

Henri de Saint-Simon bequeathed to Cabet a disdain for institutions or heredity as a reliable means of social control. Rather, Saint Simon put his confidence in progress through a natural hierarchy of talent and virtue. Ultimately, this natural aristocracy would use their abilities for the benefit of all, and every citizen would thereby share in the progress toward perfection. In such a community each member was rewarded according to ability and need, regardless of birth and sex. Distinctions based upon wealth -- private property -- were removed since the state owned all the land. Women were the equal of men.<sup>12</sup>

Charles Fourier's influence on Cabet came through the former's ideas about the laws which govern society. Put briefly, Fourier asserted that the basic instincts of men were healthy and that they naturally wished to do the

right thing in order to better their social condition. He labeled this instinct the “law of passionate attraction” for unity, a passion which drove men to organize together in clubs and associations to work for mutual benefit -- a phenomenon, by the way, which another Frenchman, Henri de Tocqueville, saw as one of the hallmarks of successful Democracy in America. Harm, Fourier predicted, came about, and progress stopped, whenever artificial institutions and rules restrained these positive, natural, social instincts.<sup>13</sup> Or, as it was put later by Thorstein Veblen, the American economist and sociologist, in his cynical appraisal of American industrial society in the book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*: The instinctive core of the Americans is sound, only their institutional husks are rotten.<sup>14</sup>

From these sources and others Cabet composed the tale of the voyage of the Englishman, Lord William Carisdall, and his companions to the isolated community of Icaria. As recorded in English and then, according to the first edition, translated into French by Francis Adams, the narrative relates a four-month visit on the island. The story is divided into three parts. Part one, over one-half of the book, is a description of Icaria and the social practices the lord found there. The second section is a 200-page history of the community: its origins and the development of communism. The third part is a brief summary of Icarian principles and theories.

What was life like in Icaria? Carisdall's impressions, he says, were drawn from first-hand observations and lengthy conversations with a citizen named Valmor and his friend Dinaros. What the reader discovers is that the community in the past had been ruled by a dynasty of repressive monarchs and that this, in time, led to anger and revolution under the hero Icar, who re-organized the nation into a democratic communism. Over a fifty-year transition period under Icar the community was divided into a hundred provinces, each of which was sub-divided into ten equal communes. Every province was governed by a Council of commune representatives, and the whole nation was under the jurisdiction of an Assembly made up of representatives from the provinces. The people also elected an executive branch of government which was separate from the Assembly. This branch consisted of a single President and fifteen Assistants. Half of the Assistants and half of two thousand members of the Assembly, as well as the President, were elected annually. In the center of the country stood the symmetrically built City of Icar, the capital, made up of garden squares, wide perpendicular streets and promenades, monuments and other well-

placed works of art. Hygiene was a priority with the Icarians and they placed their heavy industry (factories, warehouses, slaughterhouses, etc.) on the outlying areas of the city or along canals and railways.

Property in Icaria was state-owned, with the Assembly providing for a system of workshops, housing, and an equal distribution of wealth through a program wherein each citizen gave to the state according to his ability and received back wealth according to his need: A chacun suivant ses besoins was the motto ("To each according to his needs.") There was, of course, no money. In social structure equality was the rule. All occupations were alike in prestige -- at least in theory -- and each citizen chose his or her own line of work. The atmosphere was idyllic; crime, jealousy, drunkenness, political intrigue were unknown. Marriage and family were held sacred. Men and women were equal. Education was the right of all citizens. Their religion consisted of silent homage to a great "unknown God."

What has Cabet's *Voyage*, penned over 140 years ago, to say to the last third of the twentieth century? Overall, its message is as timeless as the humanistic values with which Cabet and his followers were so concerned. Essentially, Cabet was wrestling with this question: What changes must be made in modern industrial society in order to insure the survival of the importance of human dignity and human reason to bring about the betterment of social conditions? At times in the past, especially during the Age of Enlightenment, Cabet saw these ideals elevated to a level which almost guarantee an ever-improving social harmony. The industrial revolution and increasing complexity of scientific technology that accompanied it, however, threatened to pulverize this optimistic prediction for future progress. Cabet's malaise was poignantly expressed at a later date by Henry Adams, grandson of President John Quincy Adams and great-grandson of the second President. In his classic autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams*, he lamented being born in the nineteenth century, educated in the values of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then having to "wake up to find himself required to play the game of the twentieth."<sup>15</sup>

So much for a general appraisal of the relationship between the *Voyage* and humanistic values. On a more specific level further examples can be seen of the connection between the ideas of Cabet and the concerns of humanitarian reformers. Forty-five years ago Piotrowski observed:

Everywhere, today, a good deal of Icarianism has become reality. It played a great role in the social changes which came after it. No one can deny . . . that Cabetism was a tremendously potent factor in social reforms . . . He advocated not a few theories for the advancement of mankind that have been accepted as sober truth and applied in practice by posterity.<sup>16</sup>

Five areas can be identified as examples of Cabet's advanced social thinking: (1) the idea of equality of the sexes, and (2) religious tolerance, (3) his scheme of education, (4) the Icarian organization of labor, and (5) the improvement and care of the environment.

1. Equality of the Sexes. Dr. Lillian Snyder, in one of her articles on Cabet and the Nauvoo Icarians, has labeled the founder a "women's libber." "Modern adherents of Women's Lib would welcome the view of Etienne Cabet," she wrote, "who expressed his indignation against the modern pretentious civilization which treats women as a kind of slave under an insolent despotism of men who abuse and impose their laws on women."<sup>17</sup> Among other views on the role of the sexes, Cabet held that man's life was incomplete without a woman who, during difficult times, exhibited "superior patience and devotion and being his equal matched him in intelligence and rights."<sup>18</sup> In Icaria women shared an equal voice with men in political discussions. And at Nauvoo they made it a special point to be present, and to express their opinions, at the weekly Saturday night General Assembly, even though they sat together at the back of the room and could not vote on the issues. Their educational opportunities were far in advance of European standards. Their daily life was, says Dr. Snyder, patterned after the daily habits of the men:

Everyone arose at six o'clock in the morning during the winter and five-thirty in the summer. The men took a drop of whiskey and a slice of bread before work and returned at eight o'clock for breakfast. All family members ate together. They took from one to two hours for the mid-day meal and returned at six P.M. for supper. Approximately 400 persons three times a day seated themselves in the dining room 33 meters long by 10 meters wide, a large room having 12 doors and 12 windows.<sup>19</sup>



Dr. Snyder ended her discussion of Icarian women with the point that:

Although, in reality, the women in the Colony were occupied mainly in their roles of wife and mother, Cabet was in advance of the feminist movement in urging women to be broadly educated in order to fulfill their own needs and destiny as human beings within a social order which in essence respected their intelligence and creative contribution.<sup>20</sup>

2. Religious Toleration. In his native country (and much of continental Europe) during the first half of the last century governmental intolerance of dissident religious sects was common practice. Cabet, in protest, preached time and again in the *Voyage* that all religious opinion must be respected and that individuals must be treated equally before the law. He believed that fighting over differences of religious views was not a legitimate concern of society. A person's ideas on such matters was not a private concern between the individual and the Creator. What mattered, he asserted, was that one's actions were consistent with the ethics of brotherly love. Cabet's ideas on religious tolerance were succinctly phrased a generation before him by Thomas Jefferson, who, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* published in Paris in 1784, argued:

The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as they are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg. Reason and free injury are the only effectual agents against error.<sup>21</sup>

3. Education. The citizens of Icaria practiced some very modern ideas of public education. Their basic concept was that the state had an obligation to provide free educational opportunities for everyone, both formal and informal, from childhood through adult life. Cabet asserted that the goal of education, ultimately, was not just to accumulate a body of knowledge, but to make the individual a better member of the community--a concept central to the twentieth-century philosophy of progressive education. On page 184 of the second edition of the *Voyage* Cabet wrote that "education gives us all the physical habits and morals to man in society and above all to

citizens taken collectively.<sup>22</sup> These essential habits he identified as curiosity, reason, and judgment. The Icarian curriculum, as explained in chapter ten of part one of the book, included a uniform elementary education begun at the age of five in gymnastics (education physique), the sciences, literature and grammar, and mathematics. Classical and modern languages were excluded, since Cabet believed the study of languages to be a profession which required later specialized training. This second “specialized” stage of education started at the age of eighteen for boys and seventeen for girls and was carried out in two phases until the age of twenty-one. The first or theoretical part taught students the “knowledge necessary to excell in their scientific or industrial profession.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, general education was continued with an in-depth study of the core of history, literature, and health. The second or practical aspect of specialized education was a scheme of on-job training as an apprentice in one of the workshops. Finally, Icarians were given a moral education, begun first in the family by the mother and the father, especially through the influence of the former, and continued over “a dozen years wherein the child acquires all the qualities and truths, evades all the faults and vices.”<sup>24</sup> This part of education, he said, was a “perpetual course of morality in action.” The whole educational scheme was absolutely indispensable to the success of Icaria. Without it, Cabet predicted, “the Community would be impossible, and it is it which prepares us for all the joys and all the duties of social and political life.”<sup>25</sup>

4. Organization of Labor. One of the most advanced social practices seen in Icaria was to have labor share in the management of production, to shorten the workday in order to allow more time for reading, study, and recreation, and to improve the physical surroundings of the workshops and provide safeguards for the prevention of physical injury on the job.<sup>26</sup>

5. Improvement of the Environment. A better all-round community environment went hand-in-hand with Cabet’s advanced plans for labor. Central to the happiness of Icaria were such programs as cleaner streets, sturdier dwellings, safe water, and a state-supported program for recreation.<sup>27</sup> Despite the flaws, Cabet has handed down an important legacy. His message conveys an unswerving confidence in the perfectability of man and the social community in which he lives. Piotrowski has reflected on the message of *Voyage in Icaria* by writing:



His high motives, his moderation as a social reformer, his program for a pacifistic reconstruction of society, his theory of persuasion over force in social thinking, -- all deserve a careful consideration of his views of society and his suggestions for a new social scheme. For apart from the sadly famous history of Icaria in the United States, 'There exists a Cabet who is generally unknown and who, it seems to me, deserves something better than the oblivion into which he has fallen.'<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the final word on the Cabet legacy should come from Cabet himself. In the Preface of the second edition of the *Voyage*, published in 1842, he wrote:

When one considers the richness which beneficent Nature has heaped upon the human species, and the Intelligence or Reason which she has given him to serve as an instrument and guide, it is impossible to admit that the destiny of mankind is to be unhappiness on earth; and when one considers that he is essentially sociable, and by consequence sympathetic and affectionate, it is not possible to admit that he is naturally wicked.

He concluded:

We cannot flatter ourselves that we have committed no errors; but our conscience renders us the consoling testimony that our work is the inspiration of the most pure and the most ardent love of Humanity.<sup>29</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

1. For the standard treatment of the European background to the Icarians see Albert Shaw, *Icarian A Chapter in the History of Communism* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1972) and Jules Jean Prudhommeaux, *Icarie Et Son Fondateur, Etienne Cabet* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1972).
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20. Ibid., p. 5.
21. Thomas Jefferson *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Paris, 1782), p. 293, as reprinted in Paul Leicester Ford, *The Writing of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1894), vol. 3, p. 263.

22. Cabet, *Voyage*, p. 184.
23. Ibid., p. 84.
24. Ibid., p. 82.
26. Ibid., p. 95.
26. Ibid., pp. 464-470.
27. Ibid., "First Part," pp. 1-302.
28. Piotrowski, *Cabet*, pp. 139-40.
29. Cabet, *Voyage*, Preface, i, vii.

# HUMANISTIC VALUES OF THE ICARIAN COMMUNITY TO SUSTAIN LIFE

Del Stites

It may seem to many that the topic of this paper "Humanistic Values of the Icarian Community to Sustain Life" involves an inherent contradiction. People might argue that the elements which in fact sustain the life of a society and the individuals of which it is composed are purely material in nature, biological and economic in particular. Having made this assertion, they then might force the distinction between such material elements and what are usually termed humanistic values, arguing that the two are worlds apart. This separation of humanistic values and life-sustaining elements probably rests on the assumption that to speak of humanistic values is to speak of something ethereal, religious, artificial to life, and perhaps something added on to our accounts of the world. Albeit it is at least partially true of many views of human values, I believe a case can be made that for the Icarian Community the ideas and ideals often called humanistic did promote and sustain the life of the community. And, although the historic success of the movement can be questioned, the centrality of humanistic values in the movement cannot be questioned.

Before we look for the existence of humanistic values in the life of the Icarians, let us define what we mean by humanistic values. Often this phrase means little more than whatever values seem positive and important to the person using the term. Thus a Christian might think of sympathy, kindness, humility as humanistic virtues, while a follower of someone such as Frederich Nietzsche would consider these weaknesses and vices rather than virtues and instead might offer self-assertiveness, resolve, and action as examples of true humanistic values. To avoid such extreme ambiguity and any subsequent confusion the phrase might produce, I will speak of humanistic values as those feelings of positive or negative worth that are attached to ideas and actions, common to the philosophical and literary movement called humanism.

This movement, which developed in Italy in the fourteenth century and then spread throughout Europe, took as its basis the belief that human beings are the measure of all things, that human life is of first importance and that the proper study of existence includes the integration of people and their history as a part of nature. I believe that this Icarian humanism can be expressed in the French Revolution's slogan of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

## Liberty

One of the main beliefs of humanism is the importance of freedom for humanity. Humanists have continually believed that the human lot in life is not predetermined; that people are not mere pawns in a cosmic chess game controlled by God, the Church, or the State. The founder of Icarianism, Cabet, was committed throughout his life both in France and America to write and work for freedom. In his *Voyage to Icaria*<sup>1</sup> he argued for a social system he believed in, one that would free the economic, social and political life of the men and women living in Icaria. Feeling so committed to this ideal, Cabet invested his life to the creation of just such a society in America.

Another example of the Icarian belief in the importance of freedom was shown in the Icarian constitutional abolition of servitude.

Even though Cabet and the Icarians failed to achieve the ideals of freedom completely, as such societies always have failed to do, the ideals did motivate and support the life of their society.

Cabet assumed, relinquished to some measure, then tried to reassume absolute control of the government of his new society. This attempt to retake control and limit freedom in the society created a chism between a minority of Cabet supporters and the majority of the Icarians, who wanted a more democratic self rule. With this break between its ideals of freedom and the practical application of government, Icarianism seriously faltered. Nonetheless, the Icarians in both camps remained steadfast to their belief in the importance of liberty.

## Equality

A second of the main beliefs of humanism is equality. Most humanists believe that the equality of humans is something inherent in each human being as a product of nature. Thus, equality is part of the human condition. It is not something one ought to have to earn, even though in a world structured with inequality, individuals and groups will have to struggle to have their essential equality recognized.

In forming the Icarian society, the founders tried to institutionalize the equality they believed in. By so doing, they state in their constitution the belief in the brotherhood of humankind, universal education of the young, a republican form of political structure, an elected presidency, weekly society meetings, communal ownership of property, and the universal eligibility of adults for government office. Also, Icarians often advertised that admission to their society was not affected by the color or race of the applicants. And, although as with ideals of liberty, the Icarians may not have achieved perfect equality, it was a constant goal for them. Part of the split in the Iowa Icarians was between a group of young progressive Icarians and the majority of conservative, older Icarians and the majority of conservative, older Icarians who they were afraid had disregarded some of the important rights and the opinions of the Icarian women. But even in the status of women, Icarians had achieved, and generally advocated, a closer equality of the sexes than existed in the surrounding American society.

## Fraternity

Historically, fraternity has often been identified with religious tolerance. Humanism has been often misunderstood to be a radical form of atheism. True, many atheists have been humanists, but typically humanists have not been militant atheists. Generally they have been tolerant of the rights and maintenance of personal religious beliefs and the individual's rights to freedom of religion and worship, yet humanists have often been intolerant of severe asceticism and dogmatic theology. For this reason, it is possible to label the Icarian movement both religious and non-religious in nature.

If we consider a movement religious if it is led by a visionary mystic who believes he or she is directed by his God or gods to create a new order,

then Icarianism is non-religious; for Cabet's leadership rested on what he and others considered a rational and necessarily natural development in the history of human society and not the culmination of a supernatural plan.

On the other hand, Icarianism had, at its roots, and in its stalk, many values which it co-opted from and shared with traditional modern religion, especially Christianity. So Cabet's approach is a kind of rational deism, where the phrase "to practice true Christianity" was interpreted by the Icarians to mean the development of a rational, communal, socialistic society which sought the classical values of peace, human dignity, and human happiness.

In many cases, Icarians idealized religious tolerance. They did not, as a society, observe formal public worship or religious activities. However, they did meet together on Sundays to hear Cabet discuss various interpretations of his book, *True Christianity According to Jesus Christ*.<sup>2</sup> Sunday was a day in which individuals rested or participated in sporting or cultural events, each person doing pretty well as he pleased.

As a group, Icarians did not adopt or subscribe to a particular religious catechism. In not doing so, they were often the objects of religion intolerance themselves. As an example of this, Marie Marchand Ross, in her autobiography, *Child of Icaria*, tells the story of her encounter with Will Ross, a boy from Corning who was employed for the summer at Icaria as a hired man. She related that:

Will's folks were all very religious and had warned him against the Icarians as being heretics, of which they had the reputation outside, because they had no church and professed no orthodox religion, but, Marie told him that theirs was the true religion of Christ's teachings on which principles the community was founded--brotherly love, which meant equal rights for all, no division into rich or poor, no struggle for existence against one another, but an organization wherein all worked in the interest of each and each for all.<sup>3</sup>



This neutral religious perspective is also pictured in "A Social Experiment" by Madame E. Fleury Robinson. "The Icarian Community," she said, "as an example of a life in common, has great illustrative value. Having no special religious creed, the principles of its members were exiled into a religion, without Christ, the Bible, or Theology."<sup>4</sup> So, Icarianism was religious in the sense that it stressed some of the same moral tenants as orthodox religion, but was clearly not religious in that it advocated no particular supernatural interpretation of human history of their movement. But, even in this, they were tolerant of the views of other people.

### Self-reliance

Another of the common traits of humanism was the belief of the necessity of self-reliance and independence. The Icarians felt that in much of the world they lived in, people were subjected and exploited. Their critique of capitalism was that the private ownership of property created social inequalities and thus put individuals at the mercy of a small number of despots, and thereby they became servants and slaves. The historic development of this subjection, according to Chapter 1 of the Icarian Constitution is as follows:

Theocrats, calling themselves ministers of the gods that ignorance had created, and warriors, proclaiming themselves superior to agriculturists, began by combining their strength, their knowledge and their cunning against the latter class, despoiling them of the authority they had in their families, and substituting for family authority the authority of government. But, the usurpations were not limited to this. After subordinating the agriculturists, after taking possession of the consciences of people and making them fanatics by superstition, the priests and warriors appropriated the land and the instruments of labor and replaced free and voluntary production by production under their exclusive orders. The germs of the modern slavery system were thus disclosed. The path from this point to slavery was but the distance of one more usurpation. The new aristocracy, logical in its encroachments, seized individuals by the same rights that it had despoiled them. It was inevitable.<sup>5</sup>

The Icarian constitution, then, claimed that the use of force by despots had created slavery, castes, and also war. It claimed that individual property was the beginning of the exploitation of humans, and thereby their loss of self-reliance. The Icarians, acting independent of political and social dominance, left France to create a society where they could be self-reliant, and one they hoped would blossom and affect the rest of human society at large. They created a nearly self-reliant society with its own farms, mills, shops, and schools.

### Conclusion

Thus, we find the Icarians believed in and supported many of the same views promulgated by the humanistic movement in Europe: freedom of liberty, equality, religious tolerance or fraternity, and self-reliance.

Not only did these humanistic values give rise to Icarianism, they also helped sustain the society throughout its nearly fifty-year history. The deaths and disasters in Texas could not destroy their ideals. The split between the Nauvoo Icarians and the Cheltenham Icarians was also not primarily a difference in ideals, but a difference of implementation of these ideals. Both the Cheltenham and Corning Icarians continued with their advocacy of social and communal living based on equality.

The difficult financial problems which beset Icaria could well have stopped the movement right from the beginning. But the commitment to their humanistic outlook gave the Icarians the optimism needed to persevere. And, finally, the split between the liberal and conservatives in Corning never resulted in the rejection of the ideals of humanistic values.

Throughout their history, the Icarians seemed to maintain the centrality and importance of their humanistic values. Unfortunately, the practical application of these ideas in terms of a vibrant, long-lasting socialistic, communal society in the heart of America was not always successful.

I cannot help but conclude with M. Robinson's account of Icaria:

Its government was simple democracy. Its system was one of pure communism in poverty. Romantic and interesting, the history of Icaria is also the saddest of all communistic histories, and deserves special study.<sup>6</sup>

It was not their ideals that defeated them. In fact, it seems that with all the difficulties the Icarians faced, it was their faith in these ideals that did the most to sustain them.

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# ICARIANISM AND ICARIA:

## FROM SOCIAL MOVEMENT TO SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Wayne Wheeler

The Icarians, in the person of their founder and leader, Etienne Cabet, represent the two important ingredients of any society: idealism and practicality. It happens that each of these is the basis for the dual themes of this paper. Icaria as an ideal can best be seen in its social movement phase. Icaria as a practicality can best be seen in its community or social organization phase.

Every society or group -- and Icaria was no exception -- fulfills its goal and the needs of its members by mixing the ideal with the practical or social movement with social organization. In other words, social change and social stability are hallmarks of every human group, large or small.<sup>1</sup>

The history of Icaria can be divided rather nicely into a social movement stage and a social organization stage. In its first or social movement phase, Icarianism was, of course, the brain child of Cabet and had its existence mostly in France but also elsewhere in Europe in the 1840's. But why would such a movement spring up at this particular time and in this particular place? What "caused" Icarianism? The roots of Icaria lie in both the previous history of France and in the contemporary events and attitudes of the French people, especially those who were respectable, working class artisans --stonecutters, cabinet makers, and the like. At issue was whether France could break its old bonds of political and historical backwardness and renew itself while remaining true to the ideals of the 1789 Revolution.

Icarianism as a social movement pointed the way for doing this, and the ideals that inspired the Icarians and the problems of France that concerned them were shared by many others. As a group, these concerned people were often called utopian communists. They sometimes were known as romantic utopians or Christian communists. Among the better-known names of these utopians were Saint Simon, Charles Fourier, and August Comte, and, of course, Etienne Cabet<sup>2</sup> some of these men were more impractical than others. Cabet was unusual among them in that he was both

idealistic and a practicing politician and, although not very original, was well suited for leadership of the world's first large scale, popular political party and movement.<sup>3</sup>

What were the problems out of which Icarianism as a social movement developed? How were these problems symbolized? Both problems and symbols had deep roots in French society, going back to the period before the Revolution in 1789. The larger problem as many Frenchmen came to see it --especially after the success of the American Revolution as the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness--revolved around what kind of society the individual was going to live in and what part he would have in shaping it.<sup>4</sup>

The problem was both defined and the solution to it proposed in the by then time-honored slogan: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." It is around such slogans and the ideals they express that social movements are born and out of such movements that social organization develops.

In the 1840's "liberty, equality, fraternity" -- both the problem and the solution -- continued to be as it had been for over a century, whether the individual could have freedom from political oppression, as decent a standard of living as anyone else, and do so as a full participating citizen in a community of brotherhood. Who would then or today deny that such a set of ideals is utopian? In them is written a 200-year experiment in social movements and social organization which continues to this day and will continue into the indefinite future.<sup>5</sup>

What, then, were the problems that the ideal symbolized in the slogan "liberty, equality, fraternity" were to solve? In 1789, it had been as simple as a king who was a tyrant and a queen who did not care whether the peasants of the street people had enough to eat.

The issue had become more complicated by the 1840's. The Revolution had taken the first steps toward the political modernization of France and this process continued for decades to come. Now economic modernization was added to efforts at political reorganization. To continued problems with political dictatorship were added problems of the Industrial Revolution and individual liberty. At issue was whether there would be equality in the distribution of the jobs, income, and profits resulting from new developments in industry and commerce. In the approaching industrial

order, those groups of artisans and craftsmen who had been secure, respected, and needed members of community during the former era came to feel replaced, threatened, and degraded by the machine and the concentration of political power in the hands of the bourgeoisie capitalists. The extreme wealth of the new commercial and manufacturing classes existed beside dire poverty. At this time, the greater objective became to be one of how to maintain and enhance individual dignity in a humanized industrial community. This continues to be the goal of civilized nations today.<sup>6</sup>

While in 1789 Revolution had been both cause and effect of political romanticism, literary romanticism best represented by Victor Hugo and Eugene Sue was now added. Out of this mix of industrial and economic stress and the romantic novel, Etienne Cabet, no mere romantic but also exiled in England we must remember for political activity, wrote *Voyage en Icarie (Travels in Icaria)*.

In *Travels in Icaria* were to be found Cabet's solution to the problems of his time: An idealized, rationally efficient, industrialized community in which all members lived in harmony and brotherhood and benefitted equally from the goods and services of communal ownership of property under a benevolent dictator. It was a world that sharply contrasted with the reality that the French working man found all around him. Out of the disparity between the real and ideal and the social unrest that it created grew the Icarian movement -- political, educational, scientific, industrial -- dedicated to the relief of human misery in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Out of dedication to this movement came the Icarian social organization in its two major forms: the sect in France and the community in America. Both sect and community were markedly influenced by the outbreak of the 1848 February Revolution within weeks after the initial departure of Icarians for America.<sup>7</sup>

At this point it is worth remembering that, although Cabet had written it before, *Travels in Icaria* had been published in France in 1840. This fact is important because *The True Christianity* appeared six years later and indicates that *Travels* was the central work of the Icarian movement while *The True Christianity* was but an after-the-fact rationalization for the views ex-



pressed in *Travels*. Icarian utopianism, which had minimized the importance of organized religion, thus came to be seen as carrying on the basic tenants of Christianity. In this respect, as a sect, Icaria differed from many Christian communitarian groups which made the Bible and Jesus' teachings central to the dynamism and the changes they proposed.<sup>8</sup>

This proved to be an ill omen for the Icarian movement in France. With continued and increasing emphasis by the new industrial owners on expansion and profits, the dictatorship of Louis-Napoleon and the disillusionment of Cabet in his efforts at peaceful political change, Icarianism turned inward upon its own resources. Individual liberty in France was not attainable and so the thought of seeking it elsewhere became increasingly attractive. Economic equality and prosperity seemed unattainable for both those who had learned skills more appropriate to a system that was rapidly becoming obsolete and to those industrial workers who had hoped to share in the new prosperity. Tho these persons there remained the third part of the original ideal: Community.

Surrounded by the rapidly changing, larger French society and relying increasingly on the remaining true believers in the Icarian cause, the movement became more interested in its own maintenance than in the large scale reform which had been built into the initial enthusiasms of its members. One form of community without specific place and with an accentuated emphasis on its own internal affairs and survival is the sect. As a sect in France, Icaria remained true to its basic ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity but became increasingly separated and isolated from the social mainstream. Because the attainment of these goals was increasingly frustrated at home, migration to a new community where the experiment could be carried out without interference became very attractive.

In America, the story of the Icarian communities is the story of dedicated efforts to achieve the three-part utopian ideal of the movement stage of the Icarian experiment: individual freedom, equal distribution of work and economic return, and security in brotherhood. The experience in France had already shown the extreme difficulty in maintaining just the right balance among these three goals and history would show that it would not be easier elsewhere. The ultimate social organization could not even commence in Texas because there existed neither technique nor understanding of resources nor the time required to build the sense of communal brotherhood.

After the sojourn in New Orleans, Icaria/Nauvoo and especially Icaria/Corning became the proving ground for utopian social organization and ideals. The issue was constantly about which of the three ideals that had rallied the movement would come to prevail. At Nauvoo, and later Cheltenham, the economic foundation of the Icarian community came not only from the labor and skills of the citizens but, important, from the resources they had brought with them or that were remitted by the believers who remained in France.

At this time, Cabet made the error that leaders of movements and organizations often make and which was recently and more dramatically made by he Reverend Jim Jones in Guyana. He confused his own person and private desires with the needs and goals of the community and its members. To him he was Icaria! But to a substantial number of Icarians, the ideals of political liberty and economic quality took precedence over the community itself. Thus occurred the split at Nauvoo with some persons going to Cheltenham, others remaining in the Nauvoo area and taking on the American coloration, and still others moving on to the previously selected destination - Adams County, near Corning, Iowa.

At Icaria/Corning the tensions among the three ideals persisted with one or another of them predominant at one time or another. In the face of the initial poverty, economic brotherhood overcame impulses to exert individualism. As Icaria became prosperous, however, members of the younger generation, influenced by Marxist conflict ideologies imported after the fall of the Paris commune in 1871, learned the American principle that political freedom and economic independence meant separation from the older generation who embodied community.<sup>9</sup>

For nearly forty years, the drama and tensions of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity played themselves out on the Adams County landscape. With the passage of time, community, became communities, equality became the right of everyone to succeed as an individual, and liberty became the right to move away and pursue new economic opportunity. Out of this turmoil was born Young Icaria, the social organization which for nearly twenty years adhered faithfully to the three principles of Icarianism as a social movement: Liberty--the right of each individual to have his voice heard in the councils which determine his fate; Equality--the right of each individual to expect to work in dignity and to have his needs for food, clothing, and

shelter adequately met; Fraternity--the right of the community to expect the individual to live in peace and brotherhood in return for the security it gives him.

And so, in the practical and real social organization of the Young Icaria, we find enunciated once again the symbols of Icarianism as a social movement. In the very name "Young Icaria," we see once again established the principle that had been so important in France fifty years before and is important to every society that every society must renew itself in order to meet the challenges with which it is confronted. That is what the Icarians have taught us. If it is utopian, count me as utopian!

#### FOOTNOTES

1. The French contemporary of Cabet and the "father of sociology", August Comte, recognized this duality and incorporated it into his writings.
2. In this regard, see for example the work by Sylvester A. Piotrowski, *Etienne Cabet and the Voyage en Icarie: A Study in the History of Social Thought*. (Washington, D.C.: the Catholic University of America, 1935. Reprinted, Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, 1975).
3. Johnson, Christopher H., *Utopian Communism in France: Cabet and the Icarians, 1829-1851*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 288-300.
4. Cobban, Alfred, *A History of Modern France*, Volume one, *Old Regime and Revolution, 1715-1799*. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1957), pp. 82-151.
5. Goodman, Mitchell, *The Movement Toward a New America*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Knopf and Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970).
6. von Stein, Lorenz, *The History of the Social Movement in France, 1789-1850*. (Kaethe Mengelberg, ed. and trans.). (Totowa, New Jersey: Bedminster Press, 1964), pp. 244-315.
7. See Johnson, op cit, pp. 287-259.
8. Isaksson, Olov and Soren Hallgren, *Bishop Hill: Svensk Koloni pa Prarien*. (Stockholm: LTs Forlag, 1969).
9. Shaw, Albert, *Icaria: A Chapter in the History of Communism*. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons - The Knickerbocker Press, 1884. Reprinted, Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1972); Marie Marchand Ross, *Child of Icaria*. (New York: City Printing Company, 1938. Reprinted, Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, 1976).

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

## LILLIAN M. SNYDER



Lillian Mary Snyder, born September 14, 1914 in Kankakee, Illinois, received the B.S. Degree from the University of Illinois in 1937, the M.S.S. Degree from Smith College School of Social Work, Northampton, Massachusetts in 1939, and the D.S.W. Degree from Columbia University School of Social Work in 1975. She was employed in various social agencies and hospitals for twenty-five years before pursuing doctoral studies. She has served on the faculties of the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Texas; Cornell University Medical School, New York City; and the University of Maryland Medical School as an instructor. She was Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Maryland School of Social Work in Baltimore, Maryland prior to her appointment on the faculty at Western Illinois University in 1973. She currently teaches social work in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Professor Snyder has held various offices in numerous professional organizations and is now Chairperson, Historical Research Committee, Nauvoo Historical Society, and Executive Director Descendants of Icarians. She has published numerous monographs and articles on social work and became interested in Icarian history during the 1950's while living in Washington, D.C. where she had access to the Library of Congress. Her articles on Icarian history include: "A Search for Brotherhood, Peace and

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She lives with her mother, Florence Snyder, in Nauvoo, Illinois. Her hobbies include gardening, bicycling, swimming, reading, music, and writing letters to editors.



## JACQUES C. CHICOINEAU



Jacques Charles Chicoineau, born September 17, 1919 in Mantes-la-Jolie, Yvelines, France, received his baccalaureate from the Lycée Condorcet, Paris, France. He took postgraduate courses at the Sorbonne. His formal education was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. He served in the French army in Morocco and in Marseille. He received a diploma from the Institut de Phonétique from Paris University. He came to the United States in 1959 and began his teaching career at Webster College, St. Louis as an instructor. He earned his B.S. and M.A. Degrees from Washington University and did further graduate work at St. Louis University. From 1960 to 1966 he was also a lecturer in French at Washington University. In 1967 he was a lecturer at Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville and also taught in the Berlitz School of Languages and the Alliance Française in St. Louis. He became a United States citizen in 1964. He was selected three times as instructor of French civilization and literature for the Mark Twain Institute. From 1968 to 1971 he was head instructor of summer schools abroad under the aegis of the Foreign Study League. He served as Chairman of the Department of Foreign Languages at Webster College from 1972 to 1978 and is currently Professor of Foreign Languages.

Among his awards is the Chevalier des Palmes Acedémiques (Knights of the Academic Palms) for "services rendered to the French culture." He was also made Chevalier dans l'Ordre National du Mérite (Knight in the National Order of Merit) by President Valery Giscard d'Estaing of France in 1978 and was the recipient of the "Smile Award" at the convention of Sister Cities International in Louisville, Kentucky in 1979 for his contribution to the St. Louis-Lyon Sister Cities program.

Professor Chicoineau has served as an officer in various professional and historical organizations including the presidency of the St. Louis-Lyon Sister Cities, Inc. He has written numerous articles on Icarian history and on other topics related to the history of the French-American relations. In 1962 he directed the restoration of the tomb of Etienne Cabet in the new St. Marcus Cemetery in St. Louis.

He and his wife, Odette, are parents of two sons. His main hobby is puppetry. He has served as President of the Puppet Guild of St. Louis and is a member of Puppeteers of America, and the International Association of Puppeteers, French branch. He has given many lectures and demonstrations of the art of puppetry.

## ROBERT P. SUTTON



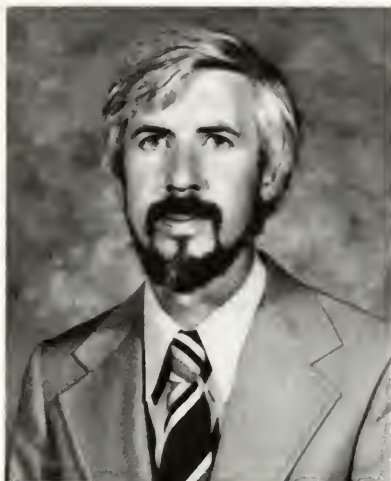
Robert Paul Sutton, born on September 21, 1940, in Altoona, Pennsylvania, received his B.A. Degree from Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania in 1962, his M.A. Degree from the College of William and Mary in 1964, and his Ph.D. Degree from the University of Virginia in 1967. He has taught at Christopher Newport College, University of Virginia, and Mansfield State College, Pennsylvania where he was Chairman of the Department of History before coming to Western Illinois University in 1970. In addition to his teaching assignment he was Director of Local and Regional Archival Collections from 1976 to 1979. He is currently Director of the Center for Icarian Studies and Associate Professor of History. In the fall of 1980 the Center was selected to be included in the *Guide* of the National Research Center, Washington, D.C.

Professor Sutton has published numerous articles on regional history and in 1976 published a two-volume history entitled *The Prairie State: A Documentary History of Illinois*. He has been a Fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities and a Thomas Jefferson Foundation Fellow. During a sabbatical leave in the spring semester of 1980 he translated from French into English Etienne Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie*. Since 1978 he has been co-editor of a semi-annual scholarly journal *Western Illinois Regional*

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He and his wife, Alice, are the parents of three children, Christopher, 14, Rebecca, 12, and Abigail, 10. His hobbies include Scouting, chess, tennis, and oil painting.

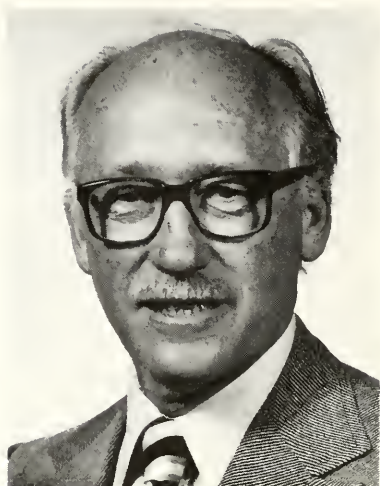
## DEL STITES



Del Stites, born June 16, 1944, received his B.A. Degree from Tarkio College, Tarkio, Missouri and his M.A. Degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He also studied at the University of Stockholm, Sweden and the Northwest Missouri State University. He has had eleven years experience in college teaching, and is currently Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Bellevue College, Bellevue, Nebraska. He is active in Humanities programs in Nebraska. He became interested in Icarian history from his longtime friend, Dr. Wayne Wheeler at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

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## WAYNE WHEELER



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Professor Wheeler is the author of numerous publications including *Social Stratification in a Plains Community*; *An Almanac of Nebraska Nationality*, *Ethnic and Racial Groups*; and numerous articles on American ethnic communities based on research among Swedish Americans and the French Acadians of Louisiana. He is the producer of the television series *Communes and Utopias*, *Historic Communities in the Middle West*. He is past president of the Midcontinent American Studies Association. His fields of interest include community, social movements and change, American ethnic groups, the sociopolitical concept "liberty," Icarian utopianism, and social change in 18th century England.



He and his wife, Lola, are parents of two daughters, Alice, and Britta. His hobbies include flower gardening, walking, photography, travel, and reading.









